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Healthy Outlook® makes the difference for patients

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Specially-designed weather forecasts from the Met Office have made a real difference to sufferers of respiratory illnesses in the UK, results from a new survey have shown.

Patients with COPD, (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease) have overwhelmingly supported the Healthy Outlook® service, and in the survey over three-quarters of those asked said it helped them stay healthier.

With over seven-and-a-half thousand patients surveyed, 89% said they wanted to receive the COPD service next year. The results also showed how the weather-related service encouraged around 4 out of 10 patients to take exercise to help ease their illness – an important part of recent health advice.

Such comprehensive findings underpin the important link weather has with health and the need for healthcare professionals to take advantage of the latest developments in this innovative area of forecasting. The service does this by warning patients in advance of a potential worsening of their condition due to changing weather patterns.

Dr Tish Laing-Morton, Met Office Clinical Director said:

> “Low temperatures were a regular feature last winter, which increased the strain on NHS resources.
>
> The COPD initiative is a great example of how we can use our knowledge of the link between the weather and health to help people manage their condition to remain well. We hope to bring real benefit and provide the platform to extend the scheme to even more people.”

Workshops during the summer will offer GPs and Primary Care Trust commissioners the chance to take part in practical discussions on COPD and learn about its impact on the health industry, patients and the wider issues surrounding treatment of the condition.

View the Healthy Outlook® patient results for Winter 2008/9

Notes

- The number of people surveyed was 7,653 from 30 PCTs.
- Other findings included 96% of patients agreed that the information was easy to understand, 87% of patients agreed that the service increased their understanding of how weather affects their health, and 82% agreed that they felt reassured by telephone calls from the service.